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DAILY PRESS BRIEFING

DPC #198

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 1981, 12:29 P. M.
(ON THE RECORD UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED)

MR. FISCHER: Good afternoon. Just one announcement today. Secretary Haig will testify before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee tomorrow at 9:30 a.m. in Room 4221, the Dirksen Senate Office Building. The subject is Arms Control Policy, and it is an open session. For that reason, there will be no press briefing tomorrow.

I note this statement says Senate Foreign Relations Committee. I had heard it was a joint committee. Isn't it the Arms Services Committee as well? Yes.

Q There's no briefing tomorrow?

A Usually when the Secretary testifies he is available for questions on any subject. However this one is being billed as arms control policy, but I believe this goes on for at least two hours so it is conceivable other subjects could be raised.

Q Do you expect that to include conventional arms transfer?

A I really don't know what the purpose is, but I would be surprised if other subjects besides what is being billed here as the subject do not arise.

Q On the Saudi plan? (Laughter)

A Anything is fair game on his appearances up there usually.

Q AFP is carrying a report that the Libyans have decided to withdraw their troops from Chad. Do you know anything about that?

A We have seen that report. We have not received any confirmation. Therefore, I cannot comment on it at this point.

Q Dean, could you address the Jack Anderson column today?

Could you take up, for example, where Haig is described in the column as being so disturbed over the column that he called twice to discuss it? He said it was obviously the handiwork of a top White House aide, who has been running a guerrilla campaign against him for nine months.

Said Haig, "The campaign to discredit him also involved persons high in the CIA and the Senate."

A Right. The last sentence the Secretary did not say. It is incorrectly attributed to him.

Q In other words, you are not denying he singled out some top White House aide?

A The original column quoted White House sources as the sources for the story; and I'm not denying that.

Q The original column quoted White House sources, but --

A Yes, as the sources for the column.

Q -- for the story. But here is Haig being quoted as saying that the stories were obviously the handiwork of a top White House aide, so that the Secretary himself is naming somebody.

A Yes, I understand. I'm not denying that.

Q You're not denying that part.

A No.

Q About who is running a guerrilla campaign against him for nine months?

A That's right.

Q Not denying that?

A No. What I am specifically denying is the statement attributed to Haig that the campaign to discredit him also involved persons high in the CIA and the Senate. He never said that.

Q Could you amplify in any way, please, that thing that you are prepared to concede, that a top White House aide has been running a guerrilla campaign against him?

A No, I'm not prepared to amplify that.

Q Who is that aide?

A I'm not prepared to comment on it.

Q Do you know who the aide is?

A I have no comment on that.

Q Is he on the NSC? (Laughter)

A I have no comment on the remark.

Q Dean, are you saying that there is a campaign underway to discredit Secretary Haig?

A I'm not saying it. The Secretary said it.

Q And you agree with -- All right. Fine.

A I agree with the fact that the Secretary said it.

Q Dean, why is there a campaign under way to discredit the Secretary?

A I can't comment on motivations here.

Q What action has the Secretary taken with the White House to counter this campaign?

A What has he done?

Q Yes.

A To what?

Q What has the Secretary done with regard to the White House to counter this campaign to discredit him?

A I'm not aware he's done anything in particular to counter the campaign.

Q Has he discussed this problem with the President?

A He did speak to the President.

Q He did? When?

A Saturday evening.

Q Can you enlighten us on what that discussion involved and what action resulted from it?

A No, other than to observe that I am informed that it is correct that the President called Jack Anderson.

Q Was the Anderson column also the reason for his meeting with Reagan?

A Whose meeting with Reagan?

Q You said Haig talked this over with Reagan, right?

A He telephoned him, yes.

Q Was that because of the Anderson column?

A Yes, indeed.

Q Did the President give the Secretary assurances that he, the Secretary, remains the chief spokesman, articulator, and formulator of foreign policy?

A In that particular conversation, I can't say; but the President has been quoted as having said that two or three times in recent days.

Q I just wondered if you could give us some information on what the Secretary considers this campaign to discredit him? In other words, what specific issues does he have in mind?

A I'm not going to get into the details of that. I'm not prepared to go beyond the confirmation that the Secretary did say this.

Q Dean, this phone conversation that the Secretary had with the President on Saturday was initiated by the Anderson column and Mr. Haig's knowledge of it?

A Yes.

Q Why did he need to call the President?

What was the purpose of the call?

A Well, he didn't need to. He did.

Q He did, but I'm asking why.

(Laughter)

A I can't crawl into the man's mind and explain to you why he did what he did. I'm just confirming that he did.

Q Why on reading a column that was perhaps not laudatory did he call the President?

A He wanted to.

Q What was the purpose of the call?

A I'm not prepared to get into motives here -- why people do the things they do. I'm just confirming that certain acts took place.

Q Was he expressing outrage to the President, seeking reassurances?

A I don't think it is appropriate for me to characterize personal conversations between the Secretary and the President.

-- MORE --

Q Specifically, did he ask or receive assurances from the President that the campaign by White House officials would cease?

A Again, you're asking me to characterize the conversation and to describe to you precisely what was said. I'm not prepared to do that.

Q Dean, can you tell us, did the President at his initiative call Mr. Anderson or did the Secretary make this request?

A All I can tell you is that my information is that it is accurate that the President called Mr. Anderson. Beyond that I can't go.

Q Aside from the Saturday night conversation, can you tell us if the Secretary has received any assurances or has asked for any assurances that this 9-month campaign will be brought to a conclusion?

A No. I can't comment on that.

Q Dean, does the Secretary have any thoughts -- nine months that this has been going on. Does that mean that the President has been tolerating it for nine months?

A I just have nothing further to say on what the Secretary said. I think his words speak for themselves.

Q Just to round the circle, can you say if the Secretary told the President who he believes is the source of this campaign?

A No. I will not say.

Q Dean, is this the kind of campaign that prompted the rumor last week of a possible change of players in the Department of State?

A There have been a number of stories speculating. I addressed some of them last week from this podium. I used the phrase "musical chairs," which is not unique to this Administration, not new to this town.

Q I'm a little lost on this thing. The Secretary says that he's been the target of a campaign for nine months; it's been going on for nine months. You've got the assurances from the President that the Secretary is his lead man on foreign policy. Haig talks about this campaign against him. I'm really puzzled that this sort of --

A Haig did not talk months about this campaign to discredit him.

Q Haig did not?

A I said that. I denied that he said that, he made that statement.

Q You denied the CIA and the Senate, but not the preceding sentence.

A It's all part of the same sentence, if you will read it.

Q I can read.

A "A campaign to discredit him said Haig also involved persons high in the CIA and the Senate."

Q But the previous sentence said, "Haig said it was obviously the handiwork of a top White House aide who has been running a guerrilla campaign against him for nine months," and you say that's right.

A Yes. I'm confirming that.

Q Well, how does it go on for nine months is my question? How is it tolerated?

A This isn't a question that I think should be addressed here. Certainly not to me.

Q Who would you suggest?

A I leave it up to your discretion.

Q You're the Secretary's Spokesman.

A You're asking me a question, how is the campaign tolerated?

Q Yes.

A I don't have any answer for you on that. You'll just have to take your question elsewhere.

Q Dean, one last one from me on that. When did the Secretary and how did the Secretary learn about the Jack Anderson column? Was it on Saturday?

A Yes. He learned about it Saturday, and an official in the Administration informed him of it.

Q Does that lead us to believe that because of the dispute between him and Allen on the firing of the transition team, because say in nine months that takes us back to the takeover of the new Administration?

A I just have no further comment to give you on anything other than the confirmation of what I have.

Q Dean, can you at least say if you have any knowledge whatsoever of who may be responsible for this quote regarding persons high in the CIA and the Senate?

A That is a question you should address to Mr. Anderson.

Q But you, yourself, have nothing to say. You have no knowledge as to who originated that information?

A I'm simply saying that it was incorrect that the Secretary said it.

Q But you're not denying that you had knowledge as to who indeed said it?

A I am not denying that I have knowledge of who said it. That's right.

Q Dean, could I take you to the sentence that follows the one that you said is incorrect? The Secretary says, "This damages my ability to carry out the President's foreign policy," calling it "sabotage of the President by some of his own people. It is just mindboggling." Is that correct?

A Yes.

Q That is correct?

A Yes. He did say that.

Q Dean, could you please tell us now what is the state of relations between the U.S. Government and the Bolivian Government?

A Yes. I'll be glad to.

(Laughter.)

A Right now, if you wish.

Q No. Could we stay on the same subject?

A We'll come back to that. I have very little to say on Bolivia.

What is the status of U.S.-Bolivian relations? We're pleased by the Bolivian Government's responses in our recent discussions, especially in the field of narcotics control efforts. A more definitive statement on U.S.-Bolivian relations will be made available shortly.

I had forgotten this was a question that we took yesterday, and therefore it's not in my book.

Q When will these statements be put out, and by whom?

A I don't know beyond what I just said.

Q Has an Ambassador been physically appointed?

A I don't have any information on that.

Q Can we go to another area?

Q No.

A A new old area, I think, is being called for. Go ahead, Bernie.

Q "It is just mindboggling," said Haig.

(Laughter.)

A Now you're asking me if he said that?

Q That you've already confirmed. My question is, what is mindboggling? The fact that the President tolerates somebody on his staff who was out to sabotage the President?

A I told you, I'm not going to characterize what I have confirmed to you the Secretary has said.

Q Could you help us in this way?

A I doubt it.

Q What does, "it is just mindboggling," refer to? The President's policy?

A I am not going to shed any light on that. I am not going to go beyond the confirmation that he said it.

Q Would you take the question of what impact this is going to have if the Secretary says it damages his ability to carry out the President's foreign policy? You are now confirming that somebody in the White House is out to sabotage the Secretary. It is implied that the President tolerates it, and it is mindboggling.

What will be the impact, the perception of the Secretary abroad, working for a White House that tolerates his being undermined?

A I'm not going to answer the question. I'm not going to take the question, because I would not go beyond what I've already said.

Q Dean, the Secretary didn't say that there was somebody in the CIA and the Senate were involved in this. Does he believe that to be the case, even though he didn't say it?

A Not to my knowledge. I just don't know the answer to that. I just know that he did not say it.

Q But you said you knew who did?

A Yes.

Q Presumably it was someone in this Department that said it, perhaps you. Does he believe that?

A No, no. I'm sorry. I don't want to mislead you. Let me go ON BACKGROUND on this point.

Our understanding is that it was something that Mr. Anderson told the Secretary that somehow got distorted in the reporting of the column.

Q Did the Secretary agree with this statement when it was told to him by Mr. Anderson?

A I don't have any characterization I can give you on that. END BACKGROUND

Q Dean, we have asked you several times how the White House could tolerate this. Of course, you can't answer for the White House, but anybody reading through that would come to the reasonable conclusion that the Secretary can't tolerate the situation that he is describing or that you have confirmed that he described. And so I think it's proper to ask you -- although you may not be able to answer it -- whether or not the Secretary intends to go on tolerating a situation in which he feels there's a guerrilla campaign within the White House against him.

A The Secretary intends to go on doing the job which the President has asked him to do to the best of his ability.

Q Would you deny that this is the form of an ultimatum, either Dick Allen goes or I go?

A I wouldn't put it in those terms at all.

Q How about those names?

A How about the names, what?

Q John mentioned Dick Allen, and you didn't --

A I wouldn't characterize it in any way.

Q Dean, did the Secretary offer to resign in his conversation last weekend with the President?

A I can't characterize the conversation. I better just leave it there.

Q Dean, you're not -- it's mindboggling.

(Laughter.)

Q On John's remark about Dick Allen, do you want to let that stand as a name you do not --

A I didn't think I let anything stand.

Q He said Haig's saying something, either Dick Allen goes or I go, and you said you would not put it in those terms at all.

A Meaning I have no comment on that.

Q But could it be Allen, since you're not reacting to that name specifically?

A I have no comment on any speculation along those lines or any other lines.

Q Dean, does the Secretary feel that this 9-month campaign has in some way impaired his ability to operate U.S. foreign policy? Has it detracted from it?

A It is not helpful.

Q Another area. A Kuwaiti paper reported, or quoted unnamed American diplomats as saying that the United States is planning to invade Libya sometime between 10-15 November.

(Laughter.)

A Can't we go back to the Anderson column?

(Laughter.)

A I am not familiar with that report. I didn't understand what you said initially, but what are you reading from?

Q A report in FBIS.

A I don't know anything about that.